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**Food Safety Involves More than the "Luck of the Irish"**

What’s the best way to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day? With corned beef and cabbage, of course! As with any holiday food preparation, safe food handling and storage are important to keep your loved ones safe. Follow these helpful tips to prepare a safe holiday meal.

**Storage**

Uncooked corned beef with pickling juices may be stored 5 to 7 days in the refrigerator if left in the original packaging. Drained, well wrapped, and uncooked corned beef brisket may be frozen up to 1 month to maintain quality of food. It's recommended to drain the brine because salt encourages rancidity and texture changes.

**Preparation**

Always wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before beginning food preparation, after handling food, changing diapers, touching pets, and using the bathroom. Use gloves to handle food if you have a cut or infection. Do not sneeze or cough into food. Never thaw food at room temperature.

When thawing food, use one of the following methods:

- Place food in a refrigerator or cooler at a temperature of 41°F or below or
- Submerge food under running water at 70 °F or lower or
- Thaw food in a microwave oven if it will be cooked just after thawing

When preparing meat, make sure workstations, cutting boards, and utensils are clean and sanitized.

Wash cabbage and other vegetables thoroughly under running water. Do this before cutting, cooking, or combining it with other ingredients. Also, make sure vegetables do not touch surfaces that have been exposed to raw meat. Cook corned beef at 325 °F for 1 hour per pound.

After cooking, the corned beef may still be pink. This is because preservatives are used to preserve the beef and does not mean that it is not fully cooked. A food thermometer should be used to ensure that a safe minimum internal temperature of 160 °F or above is reached. To make the corned beef easier to slice, allow the brisket to stand for about 10 minutes. For more information, contact the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Services, at (909) 884-4056.

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